

September 30, 2009

MEDIA, PA – Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) commented on the House passage of S. 1707, Authorizing appropriations for fiscal years 2010 through 2014 to promote an enhanced strategic partnership with Pakistan and its people. This legislation reconciles the differences between H.R. 1886, the House-passed Pakistani aid bill Congressman Sestak voted for in June, and its Senate counterpart.

“It is my firm conviction that this compromise legislation will protect our Nation and finds the right balance between revitalized engagement with the Pakistani government -- in a manner which is enduring and not merely transactional -- and ensuring accountability for how billions of American dollars are spent,” the Congressman said on Wednesday.

“I remain gravely concerned by developments on the ground in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as I have been since the beginning of the War in Iraq, when we diverted our attention and called our resources away to fight that conflict,” the Congressman continued. “However, I am most concerned about the ‘safe haven’ that Al Qaeda has established within Pakistan. As a result, the United States must now re-orient its strategy to one that views Afghanistan more as a ‘base’ from which we must ensure -- alongside the Pakistani government -- that Al Qaeda does not have a ‘safe haven’ within Pakistan from which to operate and plot against our homeland and interests. Support for Pakistan’s civilian government and armed forces is necessary to provide security and ensure Pakistan becomes an economically viable society -- the kind of society which rejects extremist ideology.

“Extremism in Pakistan does not only pose a threat to us: indeed, President Zardari’s administration currently faces an insurgency, aimed at destabilizing the nuclear-armed country’s government. The Pakistan Taliban has spilled out of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas and now operates throughout the North West Frontier. Meanwhile, Al Qaeda and its allies continue to use these areas as safe havens. While U.S. forces in Afghanistan remain the primary targets of attacks from the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces taking refuge in Pakistan’s lawless border regions, the extremists have increasingly shifted their focus to the Pakistani government and military targets.”

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, Congressman Sestak has attended numerous classified briefings and hearings on foreign policy strategy towards Pakistan. Congressman Sestak is also a member of the bipartisan Congressional Afghanistan Working Group, and he met privately several times this year with the former President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, to discuss Pakistan's future.

Bill Summary:

The bill triples the authorization for U.S. economic, social, and democratic assistance to Pakistan to \$1.5 billion a year from FY 2010 through FY 2014. The aid is meant to strengthen Pakistan's democratic institutions, including its parliament; support Pakistan's public education, and enhance health care initiatives. Additionally, it expresses the sense of Congress that \$1.5 billion be provided in each of fiscal years 2015 through 2019.

The measure authorizes "such sums as may be necessary" in general security assistance and \$150 million specifically to equip and train Pakistani police, and stipulates that a significant portion of the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds be targeted to training and equipment that will enhance Pakistan's counterinsurgency and counterterrorism capabilities.

To assess the effectiveness of the bill, the measure authorizes \$30 million for the inspectors general of the State Department and the Agency for International Development to monitor and report on the dispersal of the funds and requires a presidential report on Pakistan, within 180 days of its enactment, on a comprehensive regional security strategy.

The measure formally authorizes a Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capabilities Fund to provide counterinsurgency and counterterrorism assistance to Pakistan.

In order to provide accountability, the bill prohibits certain military assistance to Pakistan unless the president determines that the Pakistani government is continuing to cooperate with the United States in nonproliferation efforts, and has demonstrated a sustained commitment to and making progress toward combating terrorist groups.

Specifically, the bill requires the president to issue a determination that Pakistan is making progress toward ceasing support, including by any elements within the Pakistan military or its intelligence agency, to extremist and terrorist groups. The measure also requires the president to determine whether Pakistan is closing terrorist camps in the tribal areas and preventing cross border attacks into Afghanistan or India.

Finally, the measure allows the president to waive the two conditions stated above if he determines it "important" to U.S. national security interests.

The bill also stipulates Pakistan should use its own funds, as opposed to U.S. aid, to pay for F-16s purchased under a 2006 contract. This measure is intended to ensure that American aid is spent on enhancing counterinsurgency capabilities rather than acquiring more weapons to fight India.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.